

# Media Relations

Media relations form the most basic activity of public relations. Media relations, in fact, take a good part of the practitioner's working day and are exacting demanding.

## Press Conferences:-

As a public relations practitioner, it is our sole responsibility to organise the press conferences. A press conference is generally used as the occasion for the release of news simultaneously to all media, provided the subject news worthy.

The following steps must be considered while holding a Press Conference.

- ① Decision about the spokesperson who will address the press conference
- ② Prepare a press kit which must contain a press background, news release, pictures, literature about the organisation, a writing pad, a pen, a pencil
- ③ Make a list of invites from the media carefully.
- ④ Decide a venue which is accessible to the media persons
- ⑤ Make a con. arrangements for the transportation of media persons from a convenient place to the venue and return journey.
- ⑥ Deciding the timing. It should neither be too late in the day or too early. The conference should end at such a time, that the media persons are able to get back to their place and work for filing the story on time.
- ⑦ Arrange hospitality.

In fact, as PRO, we should be in control of the Press Conference from start to finish.

For good media relations, it is important to establish a personal rapport with the media persons. It can't be achieved in a day but concerted efforts must be made in this regard. Press Conferences should not be the only occasions when we meet the press. It serves our cause better if we have a friendly press.

After a brief discussion or brief address by the spokesperson on the subject matter, the floor is opened to the media persons to ask questions. Set a time as to how long we would like the conference to continue. Depending on the occasion the ideal duration should be between 45 minutes to one hour.

## Press Briefings:-

- 1.) Press briefings are different from the press conference in that they are informal and do not require elaborate arrangements.
- 2.) Press briefings can be both proactive and reactive.
- 3.) By proactive, it is meant, that certain clarifications or point of view is required to be given after a crisis situation. In this case, some media persons are invited for press briefing.
- 4.) In case of critical situation, besides an informal briefing given by the spokesperson, a written statement may also be handed over to avoid misquotation.
- 5.) In case of reactive press briefing, a press person seeks an audience with the chief spokesperson for seeking certain clarifications or to have his points of view, before filling the story.

## Press Tour:-

In press tours or facility visits much of the exercise is similar to organising a press conference. More elaborate arrangements are however, required to be made as it may involve transporting the party to a long distance. The occasion could be a landmark achieved, commissioning a project or a crisis situation like an accident. Both occasions need careful planning and organisation.

As a public relations person, you would do well to give detailed considerations to the following before organising a press trip:

- List of media men
- Suitable travel arrangements
- Accommodation at site
- Briefing press party at site
- Background information
- Hospitality

It is necessary that a responsible representative of the organisation accompanies the press party and personally supervises hospitality arrangements.

## OPEN DAYS :-

- Open house is an important tool to build rapport with the community / neighborhood where the plant is located. It is also a widely employed way of building pride and morale among the employees and their families. The Public Relations departments organise visits for employees' families and community at large, to visit the plant to see the product manufacturing process and a tour of the company. There may be exhibits, films and other activities also. This is done on a few chosen days in a year which are referred to as 'open days'. The visiting public may also be provided with hospitality by plant owners.
- It is important, however, to make suitable arrangements to receive visitors, answer questions and take them on a guided tour. This entails the provision of trained guides and also hospitality for the visitors.
- It is usual in many many industry - conducted tours to provide refreshments to visitors at the end of the tour.
- Delhi Milk Schemes, when it was set up, organised open houses for school children. The children were treated with flavored milk on their visits. Similarly, Coca Cola organised such visits.
- In fact open houses and tours of the plant should be geared to serve a wide range of audiences from employees, community members, press, to elected representatives of parliament and legislative assemblies.

## CORPORATE PUBLIC RELATIONS :-

Definition: - Corporate PR is a planned and coordinated activity which works towards projecting the image of an organisation to the public as well as to its employees. It presents the total picture of the organisation, its multifarious activities and the planning, co-ordination, analysis of its many dimensions.

- "It is a distinctive management function which helps establish and maintain mutual lines of communication, understanding, acceptance and co-operation between an organisation and its publics; involves the management of problems or issues; help the management to keep itself informed on and be responsive to public opinion; defines and

emphasized the responsibility of the organisation to keep abreast of and effectively utilize services as an early warning system to help anticipate trends; and uses research and sound, ethical communication as its principal tools.

### Corporate Concept

The Corporate Concept of PR is

- ① to project its mission, ideology and philosophy;
- ② to publicize its objectives and goals;
- ③ to establish relations with its various publics;
- ④ to <sup>extend</sup>~~export~~ support for itself in the environment and be accepted.

### Corporate Public Relation Strategies

- ① The first step involves defining the objectives, which are a broad framework of guidelines provided for achieving efficient and effective performance.
- ② The second one is planning which involves
  - \* Defining roles and missions;
  - \* Selecting objectives;
  - \* Determining the scope of the work to be performed and major result areas
  - \* Preparing specific action plans to achieve the objects.
  - \* Budgeting and implementing the programme; and
  - \* Evaluating the results.
- ③ The third and crucial step of PR activity is communication. and it is of two types -
  - \* Internal communication is communicating within the organisation through the medium of House Journals, newsletters, bulletin boards, pamphlets, memos, brochures, manuals, books etc.
  - \* External communication is communicating with the general public, customers, shareholders, competitors, through the mass media, direct-mail or through group meetings.
- ④ The final step in public relations process is 'evaluation' which teaches what happened and why it happened. It determines:
  - \* The methodology which was adopted by the public relations.

- spokesman, to project the image of the organisation;
- ✦ The adequacy of message content- and structure;
- ✦ The extent of media utilisation, its nature and suitability;
- ✦ The target audience;
- ✦ The effect the message has on the target audiences.

→ The last step is essential to review and modify PR activity oriented ~~towards~~ towards image building: evaluation also helps to find out any discrepancies between programme planning and execution.

## PR AND CRISIS COMMUNICATION: -

Hill & Knowlton, a leading PR consultancy in the USA, has categorised crisis<sup>us</sup> under:

- ✦ Actual disasters such as fires, explosions, accidents, earthquakes, floods, famines etc. These can be termed exploding crisis.
- ✦ Controversial or scandalous incidents or immediate crisis.
- ✦ Anticipated crisis due to premeditated decisions like close of a plant, discontinuance of a service, retrenchment etc. In other words building crisis.
- ✦ Continuing crisis - where an organisation, a product or a service is under long term attack - especially environmental or safety issues etc.

Let us look steps to be taken in an emergency of exploding nature

- ① The first step to alert the security for taking charge of the situation and the Public Relations persons for coping up with ~~the~~ Media enquiries. The first information report should contain the following
  - Ⓐ What is the nature of emergency
  - Ⓑ How it occurred or a few inferences?
  - Ⓒ Number of casualties and whether the injured have been removed to hospital
  - Ⓓ Have families been informed.
  - Ⓔ when are all the facts likely to be available?
- ② Identify the spokesman. The employees must be advised to refrain from speaking for the company to outsiders
- ③ Announce a telephone no for public enquiries. A responsible person

should attend the calls

- ④ Creates a press centre if the situation warrants for continuous feedback to the media or when more facts are expected
- ⑤ Be careful about pictures. The media in such situations may be interested to sensationalise
- ⑥ After the crisis is over, follow up with the press in releasing information about corrective measures taken to avoid recurrence of such incidents.
- ⑦ Words of reassurance to different publics, especially the community, should be given.
- ⑧ In fact, apt handling of a crisis can turn it into a corporate image building opportunity

→ Public opinion often swings from one extreme to the other in crisis situation, specially when a scandal or lives of human beings are involved. The swing is not necessarily based on reason. Emotion, anger, lack of trust, propaganda are some of the governing factors.

In such a situation a PR practitioner in the majority of cases have no control over the crisis. But should a crisis occur, openness, clarity, precision and empathetic communication in a planned manner can help the affected to appreciate the organisation's dilemma and its sincere effort to cope with the crisis keeping the human interest above everything else.

## HOUSE JOURNAL

② A house journal is an selective media and we can identify the audience. There are two types of house journal

→ Internal: Internal house journal is one of the important tools for effective employee communication.

→ External: - The external house journals, however aim at some segments of external 'publics' like dealers, shareholders, etc. A

A third type is a combination of both external and internal, meant for employee as well as external publics.

## ② OBJECTIVE OF HOUSE JOURNAL

- The primary objective of a house journal is to create a forum for exchange of thought and vision on various issues concerning an organisation and its employees.
- A house journal, if carefully produced, serves as an important link between a management and its various employees.
- A house journal reaches employees belonging to different cadres and interest, thus bridging the gap and creating a fellow-feeling among them.

## ③ format of house journal

- format of house journal differ depending on management philosophy and availability of funds.
- Some may have a newspaper format and be just functional, while some others could have a booklet form with varying degrees of lavishness.

## ④ How to bring out a house journal

- The Public Relations person in an organisation ideally would be the editor of the house journal
- Before publishing the journal, decisions about its editorial policy / objectives must be got approved from the management
- A look at journal can reveal whether the organisation is an open or a closed one
- if a journal is to meet its communication objectives, it must be attractive enough to compel attention and must be of interest to those who read it.

In bringing out a successful house journal, the following steps to be gone through.

Ⓐ **Planning** :- Develop a concept that best serves the company. Get management the format and periodicity of the publication approved. This will, however, depend on the aims of the journal, target audience and availability of budget.

Ⓑ **Organising** :- Once we have taken the approval of the management

, we will have to organise staff to get going with the job. The more frequent the no of issues, the greater the need for more staff. A detailed schedule for collection/writing of stories, production, printing, mailing, etc is to be worked out and adhered to strictly

© Publishing! - we must inculcate the habit of planning several issues ahead in addition to the one being worked on at the time. Being an editor, we must travel as much as we can. We must be where the action is, to have first hand information about the event. As the journal reflects the style of the editor, we must strive to develop a "personality" for our house journal.

© Distribution:-

The purpose of a house journal is not served till it reaches the target audience. We must select the quickest and most economical means possible to get the journal into the hands of the readers.

⑤ All and above before launching of an Internal or External house journal one has to complete certain legal formalities under the press and Registration of Book Act 1867. Production and distribution of a house journal needs the following steps.

- ① Registrar of the HJ with the Registrar of NP for India;
- ② Fixing of printing press;
- ③ Choice of printing paper for use in the production of the House J;
- ④ Securing of postal concession; and
- ⑤ Compilation of a general mailing list.

## PR IN GOVERNMENT ORGANISATION

→ The government is a political organisation, comprising "individuals and institutions, authorized to formulate public policies and to regulate the relationships among the citizens with in the society and with outsiders.

→ Democratic type of govt is considered best, despite its limitations. It is a form of govt that accords top priority to the famous dictum of democracy by Abraham Lincoln, "The government of the people, by the people and for the people".



- Here, the people are the masters in the govt and govt is a trust of the people; the bureaucracy and the political institutions, being the trustee; to work for the welfare of the people. Therefore, people's opinion in a democracy is given the utmost priority.
- Public Relations can play a vital role in govt and its various agencies by creating the right environment and understanding between the govt and its publics
- The need for PR in govt, be it central, state or municipal govt, is all the more essential for getting people's co-operation and their participation in all these programmes
- The Role of PR arises in government on the ground that in a democratic set up public opinion is supreme
- The primary responsibility of govt PR is to disseminate information to the public. The whole philosophy of govt PR Service is based on this principle.

### \* Key factors that justify the need for PR in Govt

- ① Public opinion to create favorable image for mobilising popular support.
- ② For assessing public reaction through feedback
- ③ To disseminate information through various media
- ④ To motivate people to accept newer ideas for development plans
- ⑤ for cultivating media relations for better publicity.

### \* Objectives and functions of the govt Information and Public Relation Service

Information System/Information Administration may be summarized as

- ① Dissemination of public information and govt policies, programmes through various media of mass communication such as NP, Radio, TV, publication, photographs, exhibitions, audio-visuals, films, traditional media etc. This is known as 'outward information'
- ② Conveying to the govt the popular reactions to official policies in the form of press clippings service, daily summary of press reactions and feedback reports as received from the field officers, otherwise known as 'Feedback Information Service or Inward information'